

The Mountain West Basketball Tournament and Zion National Park

[If the reader is interested in just seeing pictures please click here](#)

Diana and I are basketball fans and follow the Lobos very closely. We have been Lobo club members for a number of years and are now on our way to watch the Lobos play in the Mountain West Basketball Tournament in Las Vegas.

The Lobos men finished in 5th place in the Mountain West this year with what we call a very disappointed season and an even poorer coach. But needless to say we are off to Las Vegas. Once in Las Vegas we will watch a number of games (men and women) and on Thursday we will take a tour (all day) of Zion National Park.

A Quote from Zion National Park, "Follow the paths where ancient native people and pioneers walked. Gaze up at massive sandstone cliffs of cream, pink, and red that soar into a brilliant blue sky. Experience wilderness in a narrow slot canyon. Zion's unique array of plants and animals will enchant you as you absorb the rich history of the past and enjoy the excitement of present day adventures. "

Being a bit lazy this year we will take a tour bus as it is a 3.0 hour drive one way to Zion from/to Las Vegas. We have always wanted to see Zion so it fit into our schedule to watch basketball, shop at the outlet malls and visit Zion.

Another new experience will be that of using "Uber" and not a car rental. We like the shopping malls and "Uber" seems to fit the bill so we will try it this year.

As usual we fly the most cost effective way and that is ABQ to Phoenix to Las Vegas and return in the opposite direction.

We are going to try using our phones for a boarding pass on the way back. Just trying to step into the modern electronic world.

Backing up a few days we had a call from the hotel we had reservations at "Extended Stay" a few blocks from the Thomas/Mack (basketball arena) saying the room we had reservations for we not available due to some plumbing issues. The caller suggested various hotels. After some long winded discussions we ended up at the Hard Rock three blocks from the arena. Got a good discount also.

Tuesday Morning 5:30 AM, we are up and sipping coffee and reviewing all are belonging we need to take on the trip. I am just like a kid, all excited and I was awake

at 4:30 AM. Did keep contact with my sister Margie in Kansas, last evening as she and Larry were under a tornado watch. Turned out OK for them.

Oh poop it's 5:35 AM, just got a call from American Airlines, our flight now leaves ABQ at 8:20 arriving PHX at 11:01 AM and our connecting flight leaves PHX at 11:00 AM. We are on the phone with the airline, its going to be one of those days. The airline says the next flight available is 20 minutes from now or one that leaves at 9:30 this evening (those are not going to work). They suggest we got to the airport and attempt to get seats on a direct flight from ABQ to LV on Southwest. As we were already packed we got dressed and headed for the airport.

Once we are there we head for the American Airlines check in and explain about our flight. They offer us a number of options one being we stay at the airport and catch the 9:30 PM flight to Vegas. Nope, so they do suggest we go to Southwest and try to get on their flight at 11:15 to Vegas. We head to that counter and sure enough they have room for us on that flight.

We are in luck at the Lobos men's team is on this flight. Dang they are big folks. The flight was nice and lots of good chatter with other passengers. Once off the plane and we had our baggage and we where interviews by Ch 13 ABQ. A number of people report via email and FB they saw us on TV.

We checked in at the hotel and stored our bags there. The hotel will let us when the room is ready. We watched the Lady Lobos,play lot of bad calls by the refs and we lost by 2. Not to blame the bad calls just we were tied with 4 seconds to go and they scored.



On the way to the game



Watching the game

About the time the game ended they texted us that our room was ready. We went to the room and got checked in and they went and bought a box of wine and cookies and we had had a large lunch at Capriotti's, a nice place just across the street from our hotel before we went to watch the lady Lobos play. [Do you know how heavy a box of wine can get when you carry it for a block or two. Wow !!!]

We were watching Gonzaga vs. St. Mary's on TV about 7 PM and the next thing I knew it was 3 AM. Good restful sleep.

Wednesday March 8, 2017

Up this AM and ate at a place called Checkers. First, Diana had not had coffee so it was rough going plus the burrito was god-awful.

Took Uber to the South Shopping center and shopped. Uber is interesting. Using a cell phone app you stand at the place you want to meet the Uber driver and select from the app where you want to go, in our case the shopping center. A driver then selects us and the app tells us how long before he/she arrives.

The Uber driver was friendly and let us off at the Shopping center. The amount owed is charged to our credit card which we entered the first time we set up/used the app. We shopped at the giant mall on the south side of Vegas just south of the airport.



Diana shopping

Around noon we returned from shopping and had an ice cream sundry within the Hard Rock hotel so of course we dressed in our Lobo shirts and headed to the Lobo welcome party. We got to meet and speak with the Acting President of UNM and most of the male and female cheerleaders. They were all so friendly and nice. It was nice to feel part of a group,

We then headed for a men's basketball game. We watched UNLV vs. SDSU. UNLV had a 15 point lead and blew it and lost in overtime.

Picked up some snacks at the local CVS store on the way to the room.

Thursday March 9, 2017

We are off on a tour of Zion National Park. The tour company will be picking us up at 7 AM at the front door of the hotel. The wake-up call arrived at 5:30 AM. Its off to get coffee and a breakfast sandwich at Dunkin Donuts within the hotel. Oh yes forgot to enter the elevator an select a floor you need to put the room key in a slot on the elevator control panel within the elevator and then select the floor. Watched lots of people process that task.

They picked us up in a 12 passenger van which was to be our mobile home for the

day. Julian was our driver/tour guide. We were the first and then we visited a number of other hotels picking up a total of 10 passengers including us.

Off we drove North on I-15 into Arizona and then into Utah. We took exit 16 (to highway 9) and headed East to Hurricane (named after the founder of the town named Hurican but spelled Hurricane). We continued on Highway 9 following the Virgin river until we arrived at the Zion Canyon Visitor Center. From there we had to make a decision either take the North Zion Canyon Scenic Drive or the Zion Mount Carmel Highway.

As the North Zion Canyon Scenic Drive is usually crowded during tourist season (we are a couple of weeks from that) and during tourist season we would have had to change to a shuttle bus.

We where able to keep riding our tour bus. As we had been on the road for 3 hours we stopped for lunch at nice picnic area just beyond the Park entrance. The lunch was provided as part of the tour package.



The following pictures are while we had lunch at the picnic area.

As we rode North on I-15 our tour guide spoke about how the Mormons originally wanted to have a county of their own and had moved to this area to accomplish this feat. "Deseret" was the name of their new country. Deseret was proposed as a name for U.S. state of Utah. Brigham Young-governor of Utah Territory from 1850 to 1858 and president of the LDS church from 1847 to 1877 favored the name as a symbol of industry. Young taught his followers that they should be productive and self-sufficient, a trait he had perceived in honeybees. That's where the State Motto came from.



The state of Deseret which went from Idaho to San Diego. It was a plan when this area was still part of Mexico. There are many Mormon settlements from those days. Places like Ramah New Mexico is named after something in the Book of Mormon. I think San Bernardino California was founded by Mormons. Anyway Brigham Young wanted to be governor of the territory but the US picked someone else.







Diana



Next stop on tour the tour was the hike of the day. It dawned on me that a hike on this tour would be one that anyone could manage.

Hike at Riverside Walk at the end of Zion Canyon Scenic Drive

The trail starts at the **Temple of Sinawava**. Here the main canyon gets tall and narrow and has a very sacred feel to it. The Riverside Walk heads a mile and a half up the canyon where you get wonderful views



of the Virgin River as well as up-and-personal views of the lush vegetation (ferns, trees, moss) watered by the weeping walls. Take your time and enjoy the atmosphere; this hike is more about the "getting there" than the destination. Several spots along the trail also allow easy access down to the Virgin River if you want to get your feet wet on a hot day. This trail is also a good place to spot wildlife, from mule deer (often be seen at dusk), to a blue heron fishing in the water, to the common squirrel begging for food. (Don't succumb to feeding the animals!)

The trail ends at a point where the canyon is so narrow that there are no banks of land on either side of the river -- this is the start of the more rugged "Zion Narrows" hike. Most people will play in the water a bit and turn back, but if you feel up for the challenge, the weather is good, and you have good water shoes and a walking stick, you might want to hike up the river some more.







"Although the canyon grows wider toward Springfield, a very different dynamic is a work upstream from this site. There steep walls of Navajo sandstone tower overhead and at The Narrows they are only 20 feet apart. Sunlight reaches the canyon floor only rarely, creating a cooler, subterranean world."



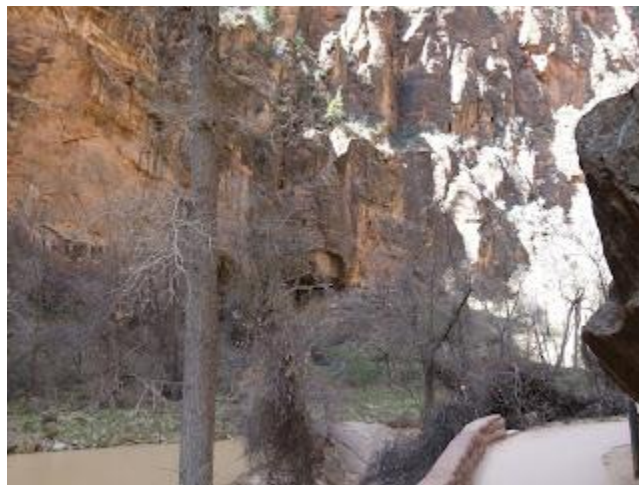
"Confined exclusivity within tough Navajo Sandstone , the Virgin River cuts down instead of sideways, Similar down-cutting action has formed spectacular slot canyons, including Hidden and Echo canyons near Weeping Rock. In the very long view, the river will eventually slice all the way down through the sandstone to the softer Kayenta layer, and hen the Narrows will begin to resemble the landscape downstream."





The **Virgin River** is a [tributary](#) of the [Colorado River](#) in the [U.S.](#)

states of [Utah](#), [Nevada](#), and [Arizona](#). The river is about 162 miles (261 km) long It was designated Utah's first wild and scenic river in 2009, during the centennial celebration of [Zion National Park](#).



The canyon is getting smaller

The river is named for Thomas Virgin, a member of the first American party to see it, led by [Jedediah Smith](#) in 1826. Smith named it "Adams River", after then-president [John Quincy Adams](#), but later explorer and mapmaker [John C. Fremont](#) gave it its current name.



Tilting Tom





"Flash Floods can arrive without warning often from storms miles away. All narrow canyons are potentially hazardous. During a flash flood the water level rises suddenly--within minutes or seconds. Floods can rush down-canyon in a wall of water 12 feet high or more.

By entering a narrow canyon, you are assuming a risk. Your safety is your responsibility. Poor judgment puts you and your friend at risk. Hikers have died in Zion's flash floods."



Tom









Water oozing out of the rocks





This trail used to be known as "Gateway to the Narrows," but it was changed to "Riverside Walk" in the 90's to make it sound more hip and family-friendly! You are likely to see quite a bit of wildlife on this trail, especially at dusk -- from mule deer to wild turkeys and not-so-wild squirrels. As tempting as it is, please do not feed the wildlife, even those aggressive squirrels who always put on their cute faces for tourists!



Back at the van after the hour long hike



Views from the parking lot











Our next stop was the Historic Zion Lodge

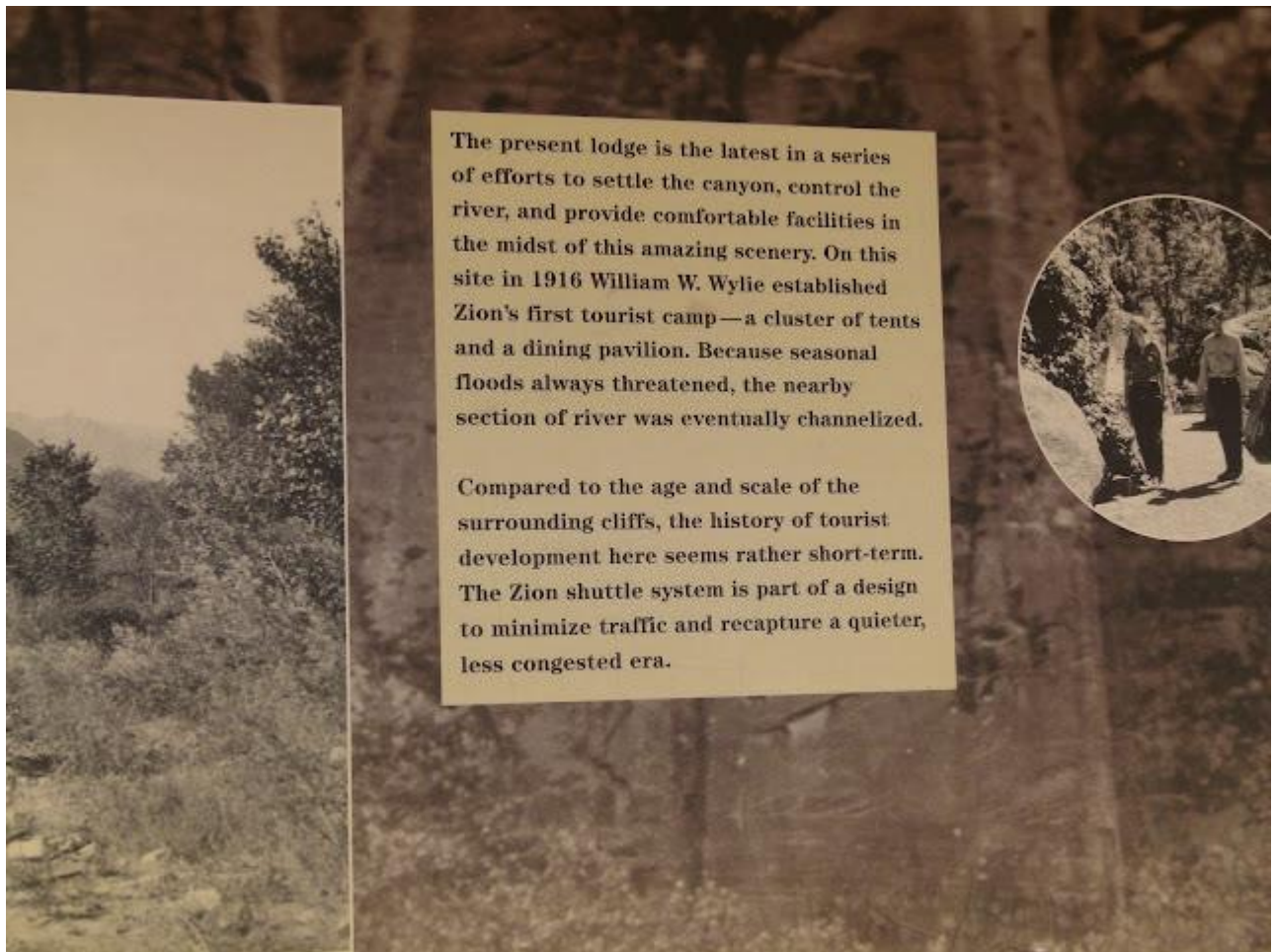
Zion Lodge History

In the early days of the National Park Service, railroad companies were often the catalyst for the creation or improvement of park accommodations. For Zion, that railroad was the Utah Parks Company, a subsidiary of the Union Pacific Railroad. With the completion of a railroad spur line to nearby Cedar City in 1923, visitors now had an easy and comfortable way to get to Zion. The next step was to provide lodging that complimented the world-class scenery.

While initial designs of the lodge called for enormity and immensity, park officials ultimately determined that a lodge in the narrow canyon should better harmonize with the landscape and scale of the surroundings. Gilbert Stanley Underwood – a frequent architect of numerous national park lodges – was up to the challenge. Using 265,000 board feet of lumber brought down from the plateau by the Cable Mountain Draw Works, the Utah Parks Company designed a main lodge building that was inviting and exuded warmth. The Zion Lodge was completed in May of 1925, and was later complimented with a series of stand-alone cabins nestled nearby. These improvements signaled an important milestone in a visit to Zion National Park.

The main lodge building stood for over 40 years until it was consumed by a fire on January 26, 1966. A mere 108 days after the fire, a new prefabricated building was up and operating. This quick turn-around speaks volumes about the significance that the Zion Lodge had garnered in the story of Zion National Park.







Diana in front of Zion lodge

Now taking the Mount Carmel Highway part of the tour. This is the older part of the National Park and was developed in the 1930s.

The highway features a 5,613-foot tunnel that follows the profile of the Pine Creek Canyon wall at a consistent distance of 21 feet from the outside face of the rock to the center line of the tunnel. The west portal is framed by a masonry facade of cut [sandstone](#), while the east portal is a naturalistically formed hole in the rock, entered directly from a bridge. Construction proceeded using mining techniques rather than traditional tunneling techniques, starting from a [stope](#) and working outward to the portals. The tunnel uses galleries to provide light and ventilation through the canyon wall to the outside air. The galleries also provided a place to dispose of rock generated during construction, which was dumped through the galleries into the canyon. Parking spaces were originally provided at the galleries, but were discontinued due to safety concerns. Some galleries have been repaired and partially closed with concrete due to damage from rockslides. The interior of the tunnel is rock-faced, with concrete reinforcement at selected locations. Work on the tunnel was started in 1927 by the Nevada Construction Company and was completed in 1930 at a cost of \$503,000. At the time of its completion it was the longest non-urban road tunnel in the United States. The tunnel's restricted dimensions require that vehicles over 11.33 feet (3.45 m) in height or 7.83 feet in width give advance notice so that two-way traffic can be shut down in the tunnel, allowing oversize vehicles to proceed down the center of the tunnel. Vehicles over 13.08 feet tall and [semi-trailers](#) as well as bicycles and pedestrians are prohibited in the tunnel. Along this highway other significant structures include the Pine Creek and Virgin River Bridges and a second, short tunnel through a rock spur east of the main tunnel.



Rock Climbers





The Zion-Mount Carmel Tunnel Construction of the 1.1 mile Zion-Mount Carmel Tunnel began in the late 1920's and was completed in 1930. At the time that the tunnel was dedicated, on July 4, 1930, it was the longest tunnel of its type in the United States. The purpose of the building the Zion-Mount Carmel Tunnel (and the Zion-Mount Carmel Highway) was to create direct access to Bryce Canyon and Grand Canyon from Zion National Park.



Tunnel Traffic Control for Oversize Vehicles Before 1989, large vehicles, including tour buses, motor homes, and trailers, were involved in more and more accidents and near misses in the tunnel due to an immense increase in the volume of traffic and in the size of vehicles passing through the tunnel.

A study by the Federal Highways Administration in early 1989 found that large vehicles could not negotiate the curves of the tunnel without crossing the center line. To ensure safety, the National Park Service began traffic control at the tunnel in the spring of that year.

Rangers posted at both ends of the tunnel convert two-way tunnel traffic to one-way for larger vehicles, ensuring safe passage. This service, for which a \$15 dollar tunnel permit fee is charged, was provided for over 27,874 oversized vehicles in calendar year 2011.





Reflect of the mountains (By Diana)



Another stop on the tour was a sandy area where we could see the various rock formations.







Tom













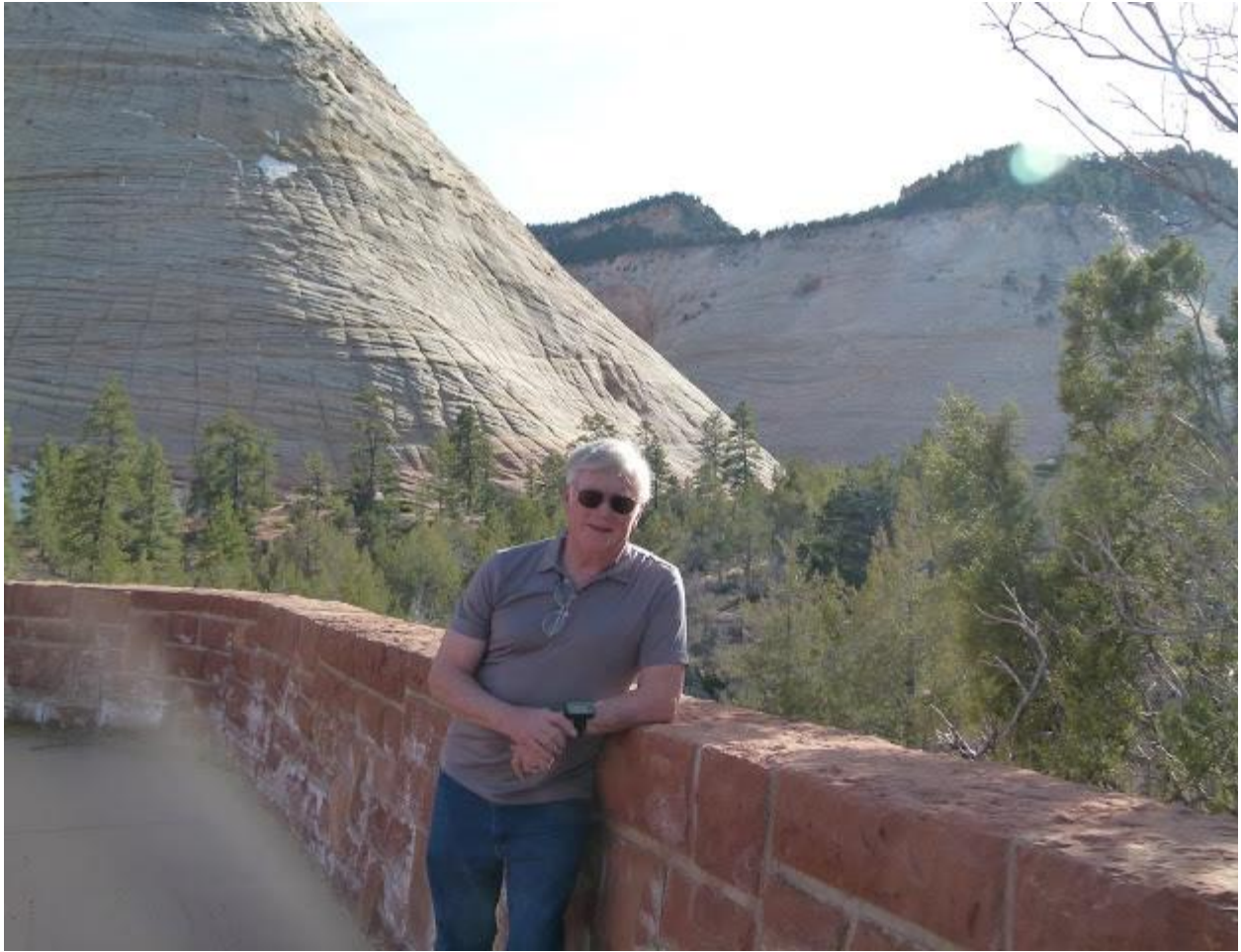
A movie of the area





These are formed by sandstone





Tom











Snow in the shade...

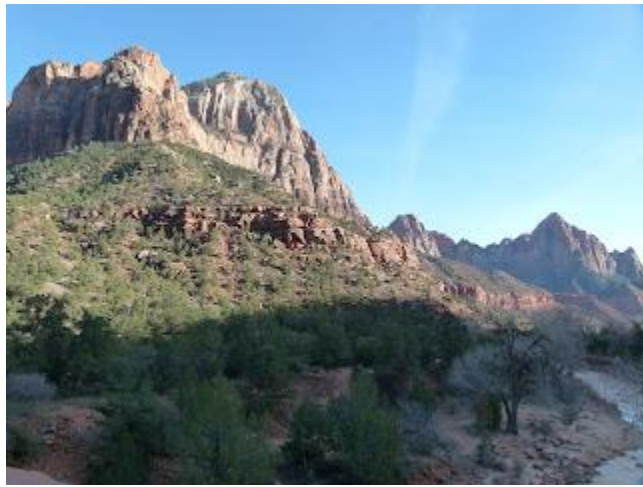














A final stopping area allowed us to see the splendor of the area.





As we end our tour the moon is rising

Got back to the hotel about 7:30 PM, picked up a Pizza and headed for the room. An enjoyable day. This trip was a very small glimpse of what can be seen in Zion National Park. Would be best to find a hotel closer and do some hikes in the area in order to get a real feel of this beautiful National Park.

Friday March 10, 2017

Had Breakfast at a place about 3/4 of a mile from our hotel. We found this place last year and it has reasonable prices and good food.



We watched [Boise State Broncos](#) win over Fresno State for their third Mountain West Tournament title and earned an automatic bid to the [2017 NCAA Tournament](#).

We also walked from our hotel to the Flamingo which was 1.75 miles one way. The hotel has changed a lot since we stayed there in the 1990s. We had hoped to ride the monorail but it was too expensive for not knowing where it was going.

Saturday March 11, 2017

In the pursuit of me making my wife extremely happy I was up early and down to get coffee for us both. I picked up two coffees and was heading to the elevator when a lady came off the elevator and asked if I had my room key--she seemed a little excited. I said "Wow Yes !! I have never been propositioned like this before". This statement made her seem even more excited. I said "Sure I have my room key lets go". She stammered and she said "No No that is not what I meant". As we got on the elevator she was groping for words and explaining in very fast speech that her boyfriend wouldn't like her to be with another man. I said well my wife wouldn't like me being with another woman either. But "Hey".. I knew she had forgotten her room key so you can't select a floor without that room key card.. I have never seen a lady

exit an elevator so fast as we reached the 5th floor. Ours was on the 7th floor room 711.

Once I was over the joke and had explained it to Diana we had breakfast at the hotel, then packed and left our bags at the baggage area at the hotel and took Uber to the "Mob Museum" in downtown (old Las Vegas).

The Mob Museum, The National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, is dedicated to the history of organized crime and law enforcement.

The Mob Museum provided us with an interactive journey through true stories. From the birth of the Mob, to today's headlines. Shadows and whispers. G-Men and Made Men. Whether you like it or not, this was American history. This eye-opening, authentic view of organized crime's impact on the world reveals an insider's look at the events and characters of the continuing battle between the Mob and the law.

Real stories were brought to life with engaging, multi-sensory exhibits and unparalleled insights from those on the front lines of both sides of the battle. The Mob Museum offered a provocative, contemporary look at this fascinating topic through hundreds of artifacts and immersive storylines. They brought Mob stories to life so completely, that I felt I was part of them.





After that we headed for the Old Las Vegas (The Fremont Street Experience)



Fremont Street had Las Vegas' first hotel (the Hotel Nevada in 1906, present day [Golden Gate](#)), first telephone (1907), first paved street (1925), first Nevada gaming license — issued to the [Northern Club](#) at 15 E. Fremont St, first traffic light, first elevator (the Apache Hotel in 1932), and the first high-rise (the [Fremont Hotel](#) in 1956). [The Horseshoe](#) was the first casino to install carpeting, while the [Golden Nugget](#) was the first structure designed from the ground up to be a casino.

For many years, the western end of Fremont Street was the area most commonly portrayed whenever producers wanted to display the lights of Las Vegas. The large number of [neon](#) signs earned the area the nickname "Glitter Gulch."

By 1992 80% of the Las Vegas casino market, however, was on [the Strip](#). Downtown Las Vegas hotels and casinos sought to build an attraction that would lure more visitors to their businesses.







Diana as we walked through the Fremont area



Tom at a distance



From there we took Uber back to the Hard Rock and walked to the Thomas-Mack for the game between Nevada and CSU. Great game and Nevada won by 7 points.

We then walked back to the hotel, picked up our bags and took Uber to the Airport. American airlines was our means of travel from Vegas to Phoenix to Albuquerque arrived just before midnight.

Checking in for our flight was no issue and our checked bag was just under the 50 pounds limit by .3 of a pound. The plane from Vegas to Phoenix was what looked like an old Boeing 737--what a bucket of bolts and very noisy. Thought we were going to shake apart and we rolled down the runway on takeoff. Landing in Phoenix was just as noisy. Landing in Albuquerque we were encountering 25 winds as we touched down but once home the wind was calm.

Arrived home and all was well with the house and the dog (Flash). Madison had done a fantastic job with both the house and the dog and even left us with homemade cookies. It took us a while to relax and finally we went to bed about 2 AM. I was up by 5 to go ballooning and Diana elected to sleep in....

That's all folks....